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We have a problem...

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Adm. Jonathan Greenert, Chief of Naval Operations

Hello shipmates,

The Secretary of the Navy recently announced our “[21st Century Sailor and Marine](#)” initiative, which pulls together a set of objectives, policies and programs, new and existing, to maximize personal and family readiness.

I’d like to cover one of the five areas in the initiative: readiness. More specifically, it’s a readiness problem that has grown at an alarming rate, and we have not been able to turn around – [sexual assault](#).

Folks, we’ve got to face the facts—sexual assault is an attack on a Sailor. On average, these attacks take place every day. Yes, every day. These attacks include “blue on blue”— Sailor on Sailor—think about that. We’ve had a former

commanding officer go to jail for ten years because he raped one of his Sailors and we have had junior officers and chiefs, who have also been charged and convicted of sexual assault. We have shipmates committing crimes against shipmates, and we all have to do something about it.

This is my problem and this is your problem. Sexual assault is unacceptable and its roots need to stop at all levels; I can’t tolerate it and you shouldn’t either. It undermines our Navy Core Values and Ethos, and it undercuts safety and readiness. We need to address it for what it is – a real danger.

It is important that we support sexual assault victims and hold offenders accountable. But what we really need to do is prevent sexual assault before it occurs. Some call this “getting to the left of the event.” This means taking a hard look at command climate, and I need your help in this regard. We need to watch our humor, our language and ensure it’s appropriate for the work place. We need to prevent the abuse of alcohol, which is a primary contributor to sexual assaults. We need to promote responsibility for ourselves and each other. Sexual assault is not just happening at “some” commands, it is happening at your command. We need to commit, as a Navy, to not accept this crime at our commands and get rid of the myth that it’s just “part of life.” It is not.

It’s about changing attitudes. It is about leadership at every level getting engaged. It’s about creating a safe environment of dignity and respect for our shipmates. It’s about declaring and

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committing that we won't tolerate this in our Navy. And it is especially about "by stander intervention," stepping in when you see one of our shipmates threatening another. We stand to gain confidence and trust in a Navy that cares about all of its Sailors.

In short, everyone needs to do something about it! In the coming weeks you will hear from your leadership on the prevention of sexual assault as we renew our emphasis Navy wide on this important issue. Let's face it together, there is no place for sexual assault in our Navy and I know we can resolve this with your effort and focus.

Jonathan W. Greenert
Admiral, U.S. Navy, Chief of Naval Operations

For more information about Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) click [here](#).

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